Students' Perceptions of Implementing Independent Learning - Independent Campus Curriculum: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract: This article aims to analyze students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of implementing the MBKM curriculum. In this qualitative descriptive study, the data were collected from students of the Arabic Education Study Program, at Malang State University, who participated in the program with a questionnaire and interview method. The results obtained from this study are: 1) students' perceptions of the benefits of implementing the curriculum are the best practices generated from the programs such as student exchange, research program, internships (calligraphy and translation minor), and teaching practicum. The main benefits are inviting students to be creative and adaptive humans. They will be better prepared upon graduation, bringing students closer to work and industry and training students who can face social-cultural changes and rapid technological developments. 2) students' perceptions of technical and administrative challenges in implementing the program. The implementation of this program was not as smooth as expected because students faced various technical issues, such as conducting the program remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and administrative issues, such as building partnerships between campus and external institutions.

Keywords: Students' Perceptions, MBKM Curriculum, Benefits, Challenges

Introduction

The world is developing rapidly along with the times. This development was in the era society 5.0, which impacts the development of all lifelines, including education, and makes it a challenge for everyone. The development of era society 5.0 in education is characterized by student-centered learning. Student-centered learning requires students who can master knowledge, face life changes, innovate in all aspects, and have high creativity in dealing with technological and information developments in human life. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) by Hou et al. (2020) defines liberal arts as a learning approach that empowers individuals and prepares them to face complexity, diversity, and change with knowledge of the wider world and in-depth study in the field of interest. In contrast, liberal arts is a multi-interdisciplinary knowledge that can be applied in everyday life (Autio et al., 2019; Bulut, 2022; Getenet, 2022; Lim, 2022;

Malcolm, 2017; Maddah, 2021; Mokhtar et al., 2021; Yurt, 2022; Zhou, Liu, & Lo, 2022; Wurianto, 2020). This learning approach is in line with the characteristics of education in the 5.0 era.

Education has become an important thing and must be in line with the times. Education could be a weapon for facing the challenges in human life. The development of this era requires various parties to make breakthroughs in thinking, drafting, and acting. On the other hand, in the face of new challenges, a new paradigm is needed in the education field (Paramitha et al., 2021). Education policy in Indonesia has transformed over time. Transformation is carried out to improve the implementation of previous education. In addition, this transformation is a form of improvement made by the government to realize better education (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Then, various policies were implemented by the government to advance education in Indonesia. Existing policies start by equalizing education with scholarships from multiple paths, compulsory education programs, and curriculum transformation from elementary schools to college.

The implementation of quality education requires the availability of a good curriculum. The curriculum has a strategic and decisive role in the performance and educational success. In line with that, curriculum development in universities is a necessity. Curriculum development must be carried out in response to the development of science and technology, societal needs, and stakeholder needs. Nowadays, education in Indonesia is still far behind the countries in the world. Based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, Indonesia occupies 74th out of 79 countries worldwide. Education in Indonesia is currently being crowded in the conversation about the new policy of the "Merdeka" curriculum (Cirocki and Anam, 2021). This new policy integrated with the education aimed at Higher Education, namely the Independent Learning -Independent Campus (MBKM) Curriculum. MBKM is the latest policy in the field of education issued by the Minister of Education and Culture (Siregar, Sahirah, and Harahap, 2020). The exit of this policy is based on the idea of independence for both public and private higher education institutions (Fuadi and Aswita, 2021). This policy is considered a breakthrough and innovation for the advancement of education in Indonesia. But in fact, this policy reaps the pros and cons that color the policy's launch (Priatmoko & Dzakiyyah, 2020).

Every educational policy needs to be evaluated, including the MBKM program. Previous research was conducted by Astuti et al. (Astuti et al. 2022) about student responses to implementing MBKM (Study on FEB Students who follow International Course Asia University). The results showed a positive response from university students providing adequate facilities for international course participants. These facilities include, by bureaucracy, very varied learning media from universities. In addition, there is research on the challenges of universities in implementing MBKM. Second, the research under the title of the challenges of higher educational documentary institutions in supporting the MBKM program by Yudhawasthi & Christiani (Yudhawasthi & Christiani, 2022). The challenges that universities face include regulation and the readiness of human resources. Due to this, changes to rules and educational curricula and the introduction of new documentation of pure science are priorities in improving professional education providers in library science, archives, and museology.

This MBKM research is still limited; no one has discussed the benefits and challenges from the students' perceptions who are directly involved in the MBKM program. Therefore, this study evaluated the benefits and challenges of the MBKM policy faced by students. Although this policy has been in place for two years, the evaluation of its implementation still deserves to be implemented and discussed. It is hoped that with research on the performance of MBKM between its benefits and challenges from the students' perceptions, it is expected to be able to become an evaluation material to improve the quality of the MBKM program so that the objectives of this MBKM program can be implemented to the maximum.

The Concept of Independent Learning -Independent Campus

The essence of the MBKM curriculum is the freedom and autonomy of institutions, lecturers from the bureaucracy, and undergraduate students in all Indonesian universities to choose their preferred fields and conduct off-campus learning activities to improve their competence through the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Standards of Higher Education (Andari et al., 2021); (Fitriasari et al., 2020). The objectives to be achieved from the MBKM curriculum are interpreted as a form of granting freedom to educational institutions, lecturers, and students and independence from complicated bureaucracies to create an autonomous, non-bureaucratic culture of educational institutions and create an innovative learning system based on the interests and demands of the world. This policy provides excellent hope for universities to develop quickly and be able to create quality institutions. College autonomy is a long-held hope voiced by various universities (Ishak, 2021).

MBKM curriculum is the first step in improving Indonesia's higher education system. This MBKM Curriculum emphasizes higher education institutions that are more autonomous and flexible to create an innovative, non-restrictive learning culture following the needs of undergraduate students. The MBKM Curriculum is implemented to meet the demands of current changes and the need to prepare undergraduate students to enter the workforce. Universities must be able to design and implement a creative and innovative learning process so that undergraduate students can achieve optimal learning outcomes, including aspects of attitude, knowledge, and skills. MBKM Curriculum is believed to be an effort to free up an education system that better supports students and lecturers in realizing meaningful quality learning to deal with the disruption of the current era.

The Program of Independent Learning -Independent Campus

MBKM curriculum is a continuation of the concept of the Merdeka Curriculum. The MBKM Curriculum concept is implemented in all universities with statistical data from 4593 public and private universities. Based on the statement delivered by the Acting Director General of Higher Education in Press Release Number: 020/Sipres/A6/II/2020, there are four essential policies for implementing MBKM (Lhutfi & Mardiani, 2020). These four essential policies are 1) the opening of new study programs. This policy allows public and private universities to open new study programs. However, this otomony requires that the start of this program is given to universities with accreditation values A or B. 2) the accreditation system of universities. There is a

simplification in the accreditation of universities. Accreditation remains valid for five years and can be renewed automatically. Accreditation A will be given to universities that successfully obtain international certification; 3) making it easier for universities to become PTN-BH. This policy is expected to allow PTN BH to establish partnerships with the industry to carry out commercial projects. In addition, PTN BH can quickly make changes to financial arrangements according to what is needed most; and 4) The right to study for three semesters outside the study program. This policy of off-campus activities can be done with internships or practices in an organization. Students at MBKM can choose eight activity models (Sudaryanto et al., 2020); (Purwanti, 2021). These eight programs of MBKM are 1) student exchange; 2) Internship; 3) teaching assistance; 4) Research; 5) Humanitarian projects; 6) entrepreneurial activities; 7) Independent projects, and 8) Building a Village. The eight programs can be seen in the following figure 1.
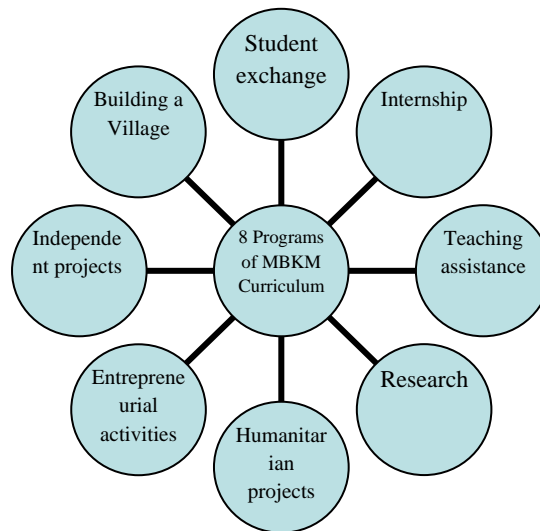

Figure 1. Off-Campus MBKM Program Model

In implementing the MBKM curriculum, the program "three semesters of study rights outside the study program", there are several general requirements that students and universities, including 1) must meet from accredited study programs, 2) elective students enrolled in PDD ikti. At the same time, the special requirements are programs that are carried out and should be agreed upon and arranged between universities and partners. MBKM Curriculum can be in the form of national programs prepared by the Ministry and programs organized by registered universities. In its implementation, universities involve external parties in formulating the curriculum so that the results of graduates can be accepted in the world of work.

Method

This study is a qualitative descriptive approach to examine students' perceptions of implementing independent learning -independent campus curriculum between the benefits and challenges. The method used in this research

is case study research. This research was conducted at the Department of Arabic Language Education, Malang State University, which has implemented the MBKM Program. Data collection related to the benefits and challenges faced by students while participating in these activities was carried out through questions distributed using google forms. The data analysis technique used in this study is the data analysis technique, according to Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which consists of 4 stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusions. The data analysis technique begins with data collection. Researchers collected data on students' perceptions of implementing independent learning -independent campus curriculum between the benefits and challenges from various literary sources. The second stage is data reduction. The researcher selects and reviews the relevant literature for the research discussion. Next is the display or presentation of data. Researchers present data by identifying, classifying, and categorizing data according to the subject systematically and comprehensively. The last stage is data inference by verifying the data that has been processed based on the specified categorization. The flow of data analysis techniques can be seen in the image below:
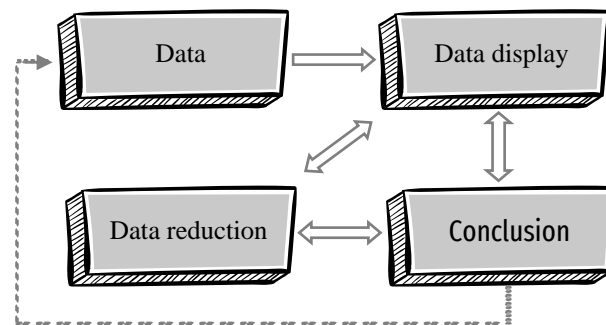

Figure 2. Miles & Huberman Data Analysis Techniques

Results

Arabic language education students who participated in MBKM activities consisted of 95 students. Respondents were dominated by female students, with a total of 71 students (74.74%). Judging from the length of academic study, the number of students ranged from 2.10% to 50.53%, which third-year students dominated. Details of respondents by gender and length of academic study are in Table 1.

Table 1. The participants of MBKM programs

	Demographic Characteristics	Percentage
Gender	Male	24 (25,26%)
	Female	71 (74,74%)
Length of Academic Study	First-year	10 (10,53%)
	Second year	35 (36,84%)
	Third year	48 (50,53%)
	Fourth-year	2 (2.10%)

Implementation of MBKM Curriculum

After conducting a more in-depth analysis on implementing the MBKM program in the Arabic language education department at Malang State University, 95 students participated in 5 MBKM programs out of 8 existing programs. Students who took part in village building activities were 1 student. The percentage who participated in this program was 1.05%. With this program, students can propose the village they want to develop in Malang or their hometown. Meanwhile, students who participate in the research program consist of 3 students. The percentage who participated in this program was 3.16%. This program is implemented at the University of Darussalam Gontor.

Third, students participating in the internship program consisted of 7 students. The percentage who participated in this program was 7.37%. Internships are carried out in the fields of translation and calligraphy among institutions *Lisan Arabi, Baitul Kilmah, and Fanjamil.* Meanwhile, 13 students participated in the student exchange program. The percentage who participated in this program was 13.68%. Malang State University collaborates with the State University of Semarang and Jakarta to conduct this program. And the most dominating participants are those who take teaching assistance with a total of 71 students. The percentage who participated in this program was 74.74%. Schools invited to collaborate for teaching assistance are spread in several cities; Malang, Papua, and others. You can see the data in Figure 3.
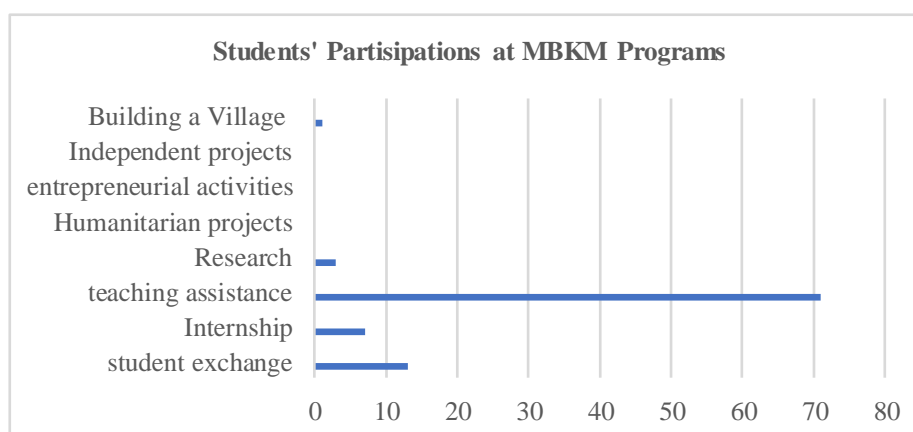

Figure 3. Participants of MBKM Programs

Students' Perceptions of the Benefits of Implementing MBKM Curriculum

To find out the success rate of the MBKM program that has been running at this Malang State University Arabic language education study program, the researchers conducted a more in-depth study by digging up information about students' opinions regarding the benefits they get when participating in MBKM activities and the benefits after completing these activities. Most students feel that MBKM activities have an impact and benefit them. Participants from the Arabic language education study program who recently participated in this MBKM activity stated that they could meet new people, exchange ideas and discuss with students outside UM, and learn a lot from students learning outside UM. This is supported by the statements of students participating in student

exchanges. They feel the benefits of joining this program and have many relationships with various universities. More than that, the benefits of the MBKM program also train students to practice public speaking, leadership, and a helping spirit. This follows what is felt by students participating in the village building program. Students can help the community develop the village, have many relationships, learn to carry out the mandate well, practice patience and public speaking, and be confident.

Moreover, the majority of students who participated in the teaching assistant program reported that the benefit of implementing the MBKM curriculum with the teaching assistance program are 1) adding experience in fun teaching practices and knowing that being a teacher is not only teaching but being an example and role model for students; 2) Help schools improve literacy and numeracy, help develop learning media, prepare good learning tools (syllabus, porta, promissory notes, lesson plans), improve school administration, participate in helping complete school accreditation administration. 3) Gain experience adapting to the school environment and members such as teachers, staff, and students. In addition, students must adapt to rules and customs or school culture that are quite new for students, so they must learn to adapt; 4) Train self-confidence and recognize the characteristics of students; 5) Assist schools in preparing Adiwiyata schools, fostering extracurricular activities at school; 6) Able to work with teamwork in groups, new insights into the teaching profession; 7) Opportunity to attend and try to provide solutions, especially in achieving learning goals during the pandemic, and making up for the lags of many students and schools themselves who experience many obstacles in technology due to areas that are difficult to reach by the internet.

Moreover, based on the statements of students participating in the research program, the best practice they get from participating in this program is that they can, where students conduct corpus-based analysis and linguistics with the guidance of lecturers who are qualified in their fields and supportive research environment for learning Arabic. Meanwhile, students who participate in the activities of MBKM Internships, namely increasing experience in the world of internships, especially in translation, writing, and publishing, starting from book cover design, layouting, book editing, ISBN submission, and getting courses on the translation of classic books. And also have Practical experience in calligraphy.

Students' Perceptions of the Challenges in Implementing MBKM Curriculum

In its implementation, this MBKM policy faces several challenges, both in general and specifically regarding available programs. The challenge, in general, as stated by most education observers, is that this policy will be difficult to do, especially for study programs that demand theoretical understanding, such as mathematics, biology, sociology, and political science. This is because the study program leads to scientific development, not job skills. Another common challenge of implementing MBKM is that universities with limited human resources, infrastructure, and remote geographical location certainly have major obstacles to establishing cooperation with large institutions and leading universities to create productive and meaningful cooperation for the development of science and student experience.

After monitoring the evaluation of MBKM activities in the Arabic Language Education Study Program, here are some of the shortcomings and obstacles encountered by students while carrying out activities; *First,* In terms of socialization of activities, students said that socialization is not in-depth, lack of debriefing, program preparation and seems forced to final students. This program is not suitable if it is intended for 7th-semester students. The solution is that this program aims at students taking semesters 5 or 6. *Second,* in terms of implementation. Students said that the information on activities is unclear and not systematic. The sudden implementation of the program was not detailed and not well organized. Then, in terms of mentoring, due to the pandemic, many lecturers are not guiding, assisting, and monitoring universities, civil servant teachers, institutions, and Field Supervisors provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture who do not come from the same area, making it difficult for us to interact directly. The solution should be carefully determined regarding the timeline for implementing the MBKM program so that students and other parties can manage time well.

In the technical issues, some challenges are faced by the student, such as funding. Students said that pocket money is not on time, so students are required to use personal costs in carrying out this activity. *Second,* coordination with partner institutions (universities and schools). Especially what happens at teaching campuses, the institution that accepts campus teaching must be informed when students enter the school from what time to what time. Third, about scheduling. These programs need to synchronize time between MBKM, especially teaching assistance with Teaching practicum, so there is no miscommunication due to the focus on one activity. And also, the actual credit exchange is not quite right because the conversion of the subject is necessary for students. So students can't learn that subject in the learning process.

Discussion

This MBKM Curriculum is believed to be an effort to enable an education system that is more in favor of students and lecturers in achieving meaningful quality learning to deal with the disruption of the current era. Learning is expected to provide challenges and opportunities for developing creativity, capacity, personality, and student needs, as well as independence in finding and finding knowledge through reality and dynamics in the field, such as ability needs, real problems, and social interaction. Collaboration, self-management, performance demands, targets, and achievements. From this statement, it can be concluded that national education has crucial problems regarding people's education and the national purpose of education. On the one hand, he tries to focus on the soft skill aspect. On the other hand, government policies tend to underline hard skills (Krishnapatria, 2021).

MBKM Curriculum concept requires education to make a strong contribution by requiring students to study freely. Simply put, MBKM is freedom of thought. MBKM Curriculum focuses on deep learning in a more real community environment. MBKM Curriculum must meet the educational trend in the Industrial Revolution 4.0, namely the mastery of new literacy consisting of data, technological, and human literacy (Perdana et al., 2021). MBKM Curriculum is expected to be able to remove the gap between the world of education, in this case, a

college with the real world. Implementing this MBKM Curriculum is expected to support the efforts of teacher study programs in preparing undergraduate students with various skills and experiences outside the study program to answer the demands and needs of the 21st-century education world. The MBKM Curriculum provides breadth in various fields of science and learning experiences for students so that later they can find where their passion is so that they are ready and able to face the real world.

MBKM Curriculum focuses on the student's perspective. In this MBKM Curriculum, students have the right to study outside the campus. The university must facilitate students who want to take the MBKM program. The learning experience from practical work is expected to encourage students to get to know the real industrial world. On the one hand, students get to know the business world and industry directly when participating in the internship program. They also experience a new experience of academic atmosphere and competition when they choose a student exchange program. Soft and hard skills are trained in the real world. Long story short, students are presented with practical and real conditions they will face when they graduate from college.

MBKM Curriculum became a discussion both in the formal environment of universities and received many responses from both the academic community and the general public. In general, this independent campus program gives freedom to educational institutions from the existence of a convoluted bureaucratic system and gives students the freedom to have the desired study program. With this program, it is hoped that the creation of a culture of educational institutions that are independent, not bureaucratic, and the creation of a creative and innovative learning system following the demands of the modern world.

However, as a   breakthrough new policy in the field of education from the Ministry of Education and Culture, the existence of such novelty makes this MBKM has the potential to cause mass and tends to be difficult to implement. This is evidenced by the number of Gross Participation Figures (APKs) only in the range of 31.5%. These results show that the implementation of the MBKM policy has not been fully evenly distributed in universities. Some of the reasons that reinforce such statements are 1) the policy objectives made are often unclear; 2) planned programs face a scarcity of resources, such as lack of information and inadequate and under-skilled staff ; 3) if the new program is inconsistent with its mission, then its implementation will tend to be inconsistent as well and carried out in ways that are already prevalent;   4) Equalization of SOP implementation of new policies with old SOPs that are not appropriate (Purike 2021).

This MBKM Curriculum received a mixed response from universities and education observers delivered on both print and online national media. This indicates that there are still pros and cons related to this MBKM policy. Although the purpose of this policy is expressly to create a culture of educational institutions that are autonomous, non-bureaucratic, and innovative learning systems based on the interests and demands of the modern world, not all universities can implement this policy. Nizam also recognizes that universities in Indonesia have special characteristics and diverse readiness to implement MBKM policies.   Pro parties with this MBKM policy come from established universities. This pro party argues that the new policy is in line with the internal campus policy that has been carried out so that it is easy to integrate with this MBKM policy.

Meanwhile, the counterparty came from a small college. The counterparty stated that this policy has some difficulties because the requirements are quite heavy.

Conclusion

The essence of MBKM's policy is the freedom and autonomy of institution education, lecturers from the bureaucracy, and undergraduate students in all Indonesian universities to choose their preferred fields and conduct off-campus learning activities to improve their competence. MbKM's policy is the first step in improving Indonesia's higher education system. The make policy concept requires education to make a strong contribution by requiring students to study freely. Simply put, MBKM is freedom of thought. There are four important policies in the implementation of MBKM, namely 1) the opening of new study programs, 2) the accreditation system of universities, and 3) making it easier for universities to become PTN-BH. and 4) freedom of learning for 3 semesters outside the study program. The four policies have a legal umbrella that overshadows them. However, as a breakthrough in the field of new policies from the Ministry of Education and Culture, the existence of such novelty gives this MBKM the potential to cause time. And tends to be difficult to implement. This is evidenced by the number of Gross Participation Figures (APKs) only in the range of 31.5%. These results show that the implementation of the MBKM policy has not been fully evenly distributed in universities. In its implementation, this MBKM policy faces several challenges, both in general and specifically regarding available programs. In its implementation, this MBKM policy drew criticism regarding 4 important programs from existing policies. Regardless of the pros, cons, challenges, and criticisms obtained from the emergence of the MBKM policy that has only been running for one year, researchers agree and support it. This program certainly has improvements in existing policies and evaluations of programs carried out during this one year. With the evaluation and input, this MBKM policy is no longer expected to be a compulsion, making its implementation a formality. On the contrary, this policy will have a positive impact on the field of education in Indonesia. It can be an alternative solution that effectively addresses educational and cultural problems in Indonesia.

Acknowledgments

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